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JACK DORSEY | AFP

PARAG AGRAWAL | TWITTER

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PARAG AGRAWAL TO REPLACE TWITTER CEO JACK DORSEY

Agrawal, the micro-blogging site's chief technology officer and an IIT Bombay graduate, gets Dorsey's endorsement

AGRAWAL WAS KEY FOR THE TURNAROUND

Jack Dorsey, a Twitter co-founder who returned to the helm in 2015 and acted as a stabilising force inside the iconic Silicon Valley firm, heaped heavy praise on Parag Agrawal, a veteran techie of Microsoft and Yahoo. "Parag has been behind every critical decision that helped turn this company around," Dorsey said in a message posted on Twitter

DORSEY'S TUMULTUOUS LEADERSHIP

- Some big investors have questioned Dorsey's leadership, as he is CEO of both Twitter and payments firm Square, a public company
- Agrawal has been Twitter's CTO since 2017. He takes over as CEO and a board member, effective immediately. Meanwhile Bret Taylor, Salesforce.com COO, has been named Chairman | P12

Mar 21, 2006

WORLD'S FIRST TWEET, BY DORSEY, READ: 'JUST SETTING UP MY TWTTR'

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TRICHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

FARM LAWS STUBBLE BURNT IN 8 MINUTES

Opposition demand for discussion on repeal bill not allowed

MANISH ANAND AND RICHA SHARMA @ New Delhi

SHOWING great urgency to wash its hands of the three contentious farm laws that have burnt its fingers, the government on Monday got Parliament approval for its repeal bill within minutes, brushing aside demands for a debate.

With that, the three laws entered the dustbin of history. The Centre managed to get the proverbial monkey off its back after a year. When the legislations were rammed through in Parliament last year, the Centre had claimed they will usher in revolutionary reforms that will change the fate of agriculture and farmers in India.

While NDA floor managers claimed there was no precedent for discussion on repeal bills, Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury argued that records since 2014 show both Houses had discussed such legislation.

The process began at 12.07 pm when Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla asked Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar to present item number 14, Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021, which proposed negating the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act. By 12.10 pm, Lok Sabha passed the bill by voice vote and adjourned for the day amidst sloganeering by the Opposition, whose members stayed put in the well of the House demanding a discussion on the bill.

Two hours later, Rajya Sabha passed the bill in five minutes flat. Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, who was allotted two minutes to make his point, attacked the Centre for alleged "deaths of 700 farmers during the year-long agitation against the farm laws".

Last year, Lok Sabha had witnessed a spirited debate on the laws for five-and-a-half hours during which Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal announced his decision to walk out of the ruling NDA alliance in protest. The Rajya Sabha, too, had discussed the bills for about two hours.

In his brief remarks on Monday, Tomar regretted that the government could not convince the agitating farmers about the benefits of the laws, reiterating claims that the Congress-led previous governments had also argued for agrarian reforms.

DMK leader Tiruchy Siva said the repeal bill was circulated as supplementary business, but was not even discussed in the day's Business Advisory Committee meeting.

Earlier in the day, leaders of 11 Opposition parties met at Kharge's office in Parliament to formulate a strategy on matters to be taken up for debate. The TMC and AAP abstained.

CLOCKING IT

5.5 hrs: Spirited debate in Lok Sabha on the three contentious bills on Sept 17, 2020; passed by voice vote. Shiromani Akali Dal walks out of the NDA in protest

2 hrs: Debate in Rajya Sabha on Sept 20, 2020; bills passed by voice vote

3 mins: Time taken by Lok Sabha to approve the repeal bill on Nov 29, 2021

5 mins: Was all Rajya Sabha required to pass the repeal bill on Nov 29, 2021

A passenger arrives at London's Heathrow Airport on Monday | AP

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT

November 28: 42,04,171 doses

November 29: 70,83,126 doses

TOTAL DOSES: 123,15,48,149

NATIONWIDE	NOV 28	NOV 29
Fresh cases	8,774	8,309
Recoveries	9,481	9,905
Deaths	621	236

KARNATAKA	NOV 28	NOV 29
Fresh cases	315	257
Recoveries	236	205
Deaths	2	5

What travellers flying to India should keep in mind

- Upload your 14-day travel history and a negative RT-PCR report, taken 72 hours prior to the travel, to the Air Suvidha portal before boarding
- If travelling from an "at-risk" country, RT-PCR tests are mandatory for all upon arrival at airports, regardless of vaccination status
- Passengers who tested negative will have to undergo home isolation for seven days, followed by repeat testing on eight day of arrival, followed by seven days of self-monitoring

Fresh guidelines for flyers as WHO warns of 'very high' Omicron risk

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Union health ministry announced new guidelines for air travellers on Monday as the World Health Organization warned that the new coronavirus variant Omicron poses a "very high" risk globally.

The new guidelines for arrivals in India, which come into effect from December 1, mandate that they first submit their 14-day travel history and a negative RT-PCR report on the Air Suvidha portal before boarding their flight.

As reported on Sunday, travellers from at-risk countries will be tested on arrival at airports, which will be in addition to the Covid-19 test taken 72 hours before departure. For travellers from countries not in the at-risk group, 5% in each flight will be randomly tested.

The at-risk countries include the European Union nations, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel.

Meanwhile, the United Nations expressed concerns over the isolation of southern Africa, where Omicron was first detected, as more countries prohibited travel from that region. In a related development, the health ministers of the Group of Seven countries began an emergency meeting over the variant.

Japan said on Monday it would bar entry of all foreign visitors, following similar announcements by Israel and Morocco. Portugal, Spain and Scotland have reported new Omicron cases. P18

No question of statewide lockdown: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Shivamogga

AMIDST growing concerns over the Omicron variant of the Sars-Cov-2 virus, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Monday ruled out any possibility of imposing a statewide lockdown. He also clarified that schools and colleges will continue to function, but they have been asked to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour strictly.

Bommai told reporters in Davanagere that there is no need for people to panic. "There is no proposal before us to impose a lockdown and there is no such question. Schools have been asked to be vigilant. We have not given any direction to close schools," Bommai said.

While stressing on the need for people to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour, he said, "We need to be cautious. We need to follow Covid norms." When asked whether the Omicron variant of the coronavirus was detected in the two passengers who arrived from South Africa, Bommai said, "We have sent their samples for genome sequencing. Once the results are out, we will know which strain it is. But we are maintaining strict vigil on travellers returning from countries affected by the Omicron variant."

On the issue of booster doses, he said that a decision in this regard will be taken based on the Centre's advice. "The Union Government has to take a decision in this regard. We are concerned about our health workers. They have taken the second dose of the vaccine almost six months back. Hence, we are waiting for directives from the Centre. We would like to administer booster doses to health workers," the CM said.

A woman and two children, wearing masks, take a less-crowded Metro in Bengaluru on Monday | VINOD KUMAR T

BALLARI, KODAGU STEP UP VIGIL AT STATE BORDERS

In a bid to handle the Covid threat, the district administration in Ballari and Kodagu are taking some tough measures. While the Ballari administration is mulling check-posts on the Andhra border, the authorities in Kodagu have tightened curbs at the border with Kerala.

Two clusters at residential school, medical college

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hassan, Chamarajanagar

AFTER Dharwad and Bengaluru, educational institutions in Hassan and Chamarajanagar districts have reported Covid clusters.

Thirteen students of a government-run residential school in Channarayapatna of Hassan district tested positive on Monday. Senior Health and Revenue departments officials rushed to the school and shifted them to a Covid Care Centre (CCC). More than 115 students, who are said to be primary contacts of the infected, were also sent to different quarantine centres. The school was later sealed and sanitised.

CONTINUED ON: P7

Opposition leaders staging a protest in the Rajya Sabha on Monday | PTI

12 Oppn MPs in Rajya Sabha suspended

RICHA SHARMA @ New Delhi

THE second day of the Winter Session of Parliament on Tuesday is expected to be stormy with the Opposition and the Centre on a collision course over the suspension of 12 Rajya Sabha members. Six MPs from the Congress, two each from Trinamool Congress and Shiv Sena, and one each from the CPI and CPM were suspended on Monday for the rest of the session for their 'unruly' conduct in the previous session in August.

The MPs suspended under Rule 256 are: Phulo Devi Netam, Chhaya Verma, Ripun Bora, Rajamani Patel, Syed Nasir Hussain and Akhilesh Prasad Singh of the Congress; Dola Sen and Shanta Chhetri of the TMC; Priyanka Chaturvedi and Anil Desai of the Shiv Sena; the CPM's Elamaram Kareem and CPI's Binoy Viswam.

As soon as Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi moved the motion to suspend the MPs, Opposition members rose to protest the move, which led to the House being suspended for the day.

Calling the suspension — the biggest in the history of the Rajya Sabha — unfortunate and unwarranted, a joint statement issued by 14 opposition parties said their floor leaders will meet on Tuesday to discuss future strategy. The TMC was not a signatory to the statement.

According to sources, the suspended MPs will meet Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu and apologise for their behaviour. If the suspension is not revoked, the Opposition may boycott the House on Tuesday.

Xian prayer halls become targets over conversion charges

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hassan, Belagavi

A tense atmosphere prevailed for some time on the outskirts of Belur town on Sunday after pro-Hindu activists engaged in an altercation with members of the Christian community, alleging forcible conversion of two youths.

Bajrang Dal activists gathered in front of the prayer hall on Billodu Road alleging that two youths had been forcibly converted, leading to heated arguments from both sides. The activists also allegedly tried to barge into the hall, raising slogans. Sources said the activists try to lay siege to the prayer hall alleging that there has been an increase in "forcible conversions". They also allegedly tried to attack the head of the congregation.

The local police intervened and brought the situation under control. Additional police forces have been deployed to prevent any further flare-ups.

Members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishat alleged that conversions are increasing in the taluk and complaints lodged with the police have not been taken seriously. They also warned that they will intensify protests if the police fail to curb forcible conversions.

Meanwhile, in Belagavi, the Christian community is anxious after public prayers which several Christian institutions were holding in private places were halted by the local administration.

CONTINUED ON: P7

Personally, we feel this is a dangerous development. Instead of asking pastors to refrain from conducting public prayers, the police should bring the miscreants, who insisted on shutting down prayer halls, to book and punish them. All that is happening in the prayer halls is within the framework of the Constitution

Belagavi Bishop Derek Fernandes

Omicron may already be here: Dr Kang

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

WHILE fears of the highly divergent Omicron variant of the coronavirus loom large in India, renowned microbiologist **Dr Gagandeep Kang** has expressed fears that it may have already entered the country. The focus now should be on ramping up genome sequencing and introducing S-Gene PCR testing to quickly detect it and act on containing the spread, she stressed.

Speaking exclusively to *TNIE*, Dr Kang, microbiologist and virologist, Christian Medical College, Vellore, said, "It's very likely that this variant is already in much more than the 12 countries identified so far. It may be in India too, but our genome sequencing is so slow that we don't know if it is here. There is no use if sequencing data comes one month after an event has occurred. Then, it becomes an academic exercise. It does not help with control of the new variant if it has entered the population. Hopefully now, the sequencing will be faster and we will have an answer to that."

She explained that this variant has something called as S Gene dropout, which means there's no need for genome sequencing too if S Gene PCR tests are done. This can give a report on the presence of the Omicron in a few hours. "This will allow us to get very rapid epidemiological information and once we have that, we will have a sense of spread." While mutation of the virus was expected, what came as a surprise is that the Omicron has more mutations (30-plus in the spike protein) than any other variants seen before, she said. P3

MIDBRAIN ACTIVATION

Big B gets open letter, KBC pulls out 'super power' episode

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mangaluru

POPULAR entertainment channel Sony TV has pulled down its Kaun Banega Crorepati episode on 'Midbrain Activation' from all platforms. The move follows an open letter to the show host Amitabh Bachchan by Mangaluru-based rationalist and president of the Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations, **Narendra Nayak**.

Taking serious exception to the broadcast of the episode, Nayak, in his open letter, had stated that endorsement of such 'super power' is a travesty of common sense and against the Constitution of India, pointing to Article 51 A(h) which states that it is duty of every citizen to develop scientific temper, the spirit of inquiry and humanism.

He had also said that if such super powers were to exist, it would be a Nobel prize-winning discovery because it goes against all known principles of medical sciences — vision without light falling on the retina — that too, not any flashes or a sense of light or darkness, but fully developed faculties. In the controversial episode, a girl was shown demonstrating that she could see things even when blindfolded.

Nayak said he received a response to his open letter from the private channel on Monday. The mail said, "Thank you for your viewership. We would like to inform you that that the said episode has been pulled off from all platforms, we have suitably edited the scenes. Further, we have sensitised the team to be more vigilant and avoid such interactions for all future episodes."

Further, the mail added, "At Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI), our endeavour at all times has been to ensure that the content is within the framework of the laws of India. SPNI is sensitive to the sentiments of our viewers. We place great emphasis on providing wholesome quality entertainment and we take care to ensure the sensibilities of our viewers are not affected." It has asked Nayak to approach the Broadcasting Content Complaints Council within 15 days if he is not satisfied with the response.

EXPRESS READ

Charges against Sriki likely this weekend

Bengaluru: The CID may submit the chargesheet by this weekend against hacker Srikrishna alias Sriki and others in the case related to hacking of government websites. P7

ULB POLLS AMIDST COVID FEARS

Amid fears of new Covid clusters in the state, the State Election Commission on Monday published the election dates for 58 urban local bodies (ULB) | P4